DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 666 FL 022 517

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TITLE North Indian Weddings: Speech Events Reflecting and Reinforcing Women's Roles.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning (5th, Champaign, IL, April 4-6, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Foreign Countries; Language Patterns; Language Research; *Language Role; Language Usage; Linguistic Theory; *Marriage; Pragmatics; Semantics; *Sex Role; Socialization; *Sociocultural Patterns; *Songs
IDENTIFIERS *India (North); *Weddings

ABSTRACT

A study examined traditional Hindi songs typically sung by women during north Indian weddings, using pragmatic and semantic analysis. Some historical and cultural background for the practice of women's singing at weddings is offered. It is suggested that gender roles are defined and regulated through the language of this speech event, and that participants are socialized accordingly. Song types and text types analyzed include expressions of family ties and relationships, insults, and statements of expected behaviors and attitudes. Vocabulary, language formality, use of grammatical constructions, and use of dialogue were examined. Results indicate that the songs' texts not only depict women as devalued, obedient, devoted, serving objects, but also acculturate women to accept this role. The wedding rites define relationships and expectations, and the ceremony pressures participants to conform to these norms. It is concluded that interaction of signs and symbols that make up rites and languages thus defines and regulates the social construction of gender roles and inscribes in members' minds the rules that govern these aspects of their culture. (Author/MSE)

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ED 375 666

North Indian Weddings: Speech Events Reflecting and Reinforcing Women's Roles

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Position paper prepared for
The Fifth Annual International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning
Parasession on Language and Gender
April 4-6, 1991
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Running Head: NORTH INDIAN WEDDINGS

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Abstract

Through a pragmatic and semantic analysis, I examined traditional Hindi songs typically sung by women during north Indian weddings. My study indicates that gender roles are defined and regulated through the language of this speech event, and that participants in the event are socialized accordingly.

The texts of these songs not only depict women as devalued, obedient, devoted, serving objects, but their use enculturates women to accept this role. The wedding rites define relationships and expectations; the ceremony pressures participants to conform to these norms (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988). The interaction of signs and symbols that make up rites and language thus defines and regulates the social construction of gender roles, and inscribes in the members' minds the rules that govern these aspects of their culture.

North Indian Weddings:
Speech Events Reflecting and Reinforcing Women's Roles

According to Edward Sapir, language reflects the perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs of a given society (1958). Current research on gender and language conducted by Penelope (1988), Schulz (1975), Sherzer (1987), Spender (1980), and others, lends support to Sapir in finding that language reflects and reinforces cultural realities. If so, can we change these realities through language? This presupposes that language shapes the perceptions of a culture's reality similar to the way that a reality shapes language. Consequently, in manipulating the members' perceptions, language serves to preserve aspects of the culture through socializing and informing the members.

Socialization and information are also internalized through ceremonial rites. When language and ceremonial rites combine to create speech situations, the speech events of these situations are among the strongest socializing agents of a culture. The interaction of the signs and symbols that make up rites and language define and regulate social constructions, such as gender roles, and inscribe in the members the rules that govern these aspects of their culture. According to Lacan, the "interrelated signs, roles, and rituals" by which every society are regulated are also internalized through language (1977, pp. 64-66). In turn, the language reflects the "interrelated signs, roles, and rituals" of a given society.

Using semantic and pragmatic analysis, I examined the language of Hindi songs sung by women during traditional wedding ceremonies in villages of northern India to determine how the language reflects the gender roles of this culture, specifically the roles of women. I chose Hindi wedding songs of north India for several reasons. The social significance embedded in wedding rites as speech events are particularly expressive of specific aspects of the traditional nature of north Indian culture and its well-defined gender roles. In addition, I had access to the song texts and contacts with women whose first language was Hindi. Moreover, there is a need for extensive sociolinguistic research specific to gender roles in North Indian society and ethnographic studies of women's practices throughout the world. Finally and most important, through an examination of

other cultures, we become aware of similar forces acting on us from our own culture. We can understand sex discrimination more clearly by studying how language and culture maintain gender roles and how members are socialized. This understanding may be used in changing language and challenging the assumptions of women's "proper" roles.

I realize that I am writing about traditional attitudes and values where women lack a private self and live within the identity of men. Changes are taking place in north India and not all women are subjugated to the control of patriarchy. In addition, women and girls in India attend school, contribute to the community, and otherwise are active in constructing roles that differ from those reinforced through "traditional" ways of living. Also, it is important to note that the traditional representations reflected in the songs and rituals are generalizations.

Social Constructions: Representations of the Dominant Ideology

Because language is a social system, it represents meanings and references that are created by the culture of a society (Sapir, 1958, p. 6). The semantics and pragmatics of a language represent certain social structures and meanings of a speech community. The strictly defined social roles and rigidly regulated social systems of north Indian villages are reflected in the language of the members. Similarly, the vocabulary of a language is an index of what the people of the system value (Sapir, 1958, p.36); it reflects their attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, relationships. Furthermore, the symbolic system of language mirrors that of the society; language use in a cultural context functions in relationship to the various roles within a society (Sherzer, 1987).

Representation in Semantics and Pragmatics

The semantics of the Hindi language reflects the distinct gender roles, the importance of kin groups, the relationships among those groups, and the hierarchies within those relationships that are all manifestations of the north Indian culture. For example, words naming family members signal intricate family relationships and a hierarchy based on age and gender. A variety of words exist for a bride's sisters-in-law depending on the status of the sister-in-law's husband within his

natal family: *dewrani* is the wife of the groom's youngest brother, the youngest brother being *dewar*; the oldest sister-in-law is called *jathani, jath* being the groom's oldest brother. However, only one word, *saali*, is used to signify the groom's sisters-in-law, his wife's sisters. Because a woman lacks status without familial relationship to a man, only one name can be applied to a woman whose relationship is through another woman, as in the case of the sisters of wives. On the other hand, the affines of men take on the husband's status through marriage; thus the women are labeled according to the rank of their husbands within the family.

This naming based on the age of the males in a family reflects and supports the androcentric structure of north Indian society. Similar practices in other languages, such as English and French, represent the ideological structures of the respective societies. "In a society where male primacy must be carefully cultivated, semantics makes a substantial and significant contribution in structuring this supremacy" (Spender, 1980, p. 23). Social structures are also represented in the pragmatics of Hindi. For example, role distinctions based on gender exist in certain speech events, such as the case of men usually not participating in the speech events of a wedding ceremony. Likewise, the *dholak ke geet* is an event usually performed by women. I will discuss both of these cases in more detail below.

Since gender distinctions are socially constructed, they too are represented through the semantics and pragmatics of a language. Where gender distinctions are well defined, verbal genres and speaking roles are linguistic representations of the gender differences (Sherzer, 1987). In north Indian society, language use, such as ceremonial songs sung by women, is one marker of gender differences; appropriate speaking roles and speech events are determined according to the speaker's sex. Normally, it would seem inappropriate for women to sing and to play the *dholak*, a kind of drum, in a public gathering, for in India as elsewhere, women's discourse is typically private, whereas men's discourse tends to be public (Sherzer, 1987). However, the wedding ceremony is mostly a woman's domain; women tend to do the preparations as well as conduct many of the rites during the ceremony. Because of this, the use of public discourse forms, such as women's singing accompanied by the *dholak, dholak ke geet*, is deemed appropriate. The

wedding, since it is in the women's domain, is an appropriate extension of a private speech event into the public domain. For this same reason men do not participate. The use of the verbal genres of each sex are evidence of the androcentric society (van Alphen, 1987). Women are expected to be silent in public unless the speech event has been sanctioned by the culture. In contrast, men in north Indian society are expected to be outspoken.

The social status of women and men is revealed through the use of terms of value based on gender attributes (Spender, 1980; Schulz, 1975; Penelope, 1988). In Hindi nouns are gendered. If a speaker wants to indicate a diminutive form of an object, then a noun of male gender is given a female suffix. For example, *katora*, 'big bowl,' becomes 'small bowl' when changed to *katori*. The diminutive quality of feminine word forms is one semantic representation of the linguistic sexism that exists in north Indian society. According to Muriel R. Schulz (1975), the semantics of a language reflects a form of linguistic sexism, a "semantic derogation of women". The semantics not only reveals but also teaches and perpetuates the attitudes and prejudices of the culture that uses the language (p. 64). Female kinship terms in Hindi have become pejorated, illustrating the "semantic derogation of women" in Hindi speaking communities. The meaning behind the word *saali*, 'wife's sister,' exemplifies one aspect of the culture's ideology of gender roles. Not only does *saali* signify 'wife's sister,' but it also is used as a term of insult meaning 'bitch.' Similarly, *saala*, wife's brother, has the debased sexual connotation of 'son of a bitch' (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 69; Pandey, personal interview). The negative connotations associated with words marked for females are a social manifestation--the result of a patriarchal system in which women are devalued (Spender, 1980). There are no pejorated terms derived from words naming a husband's blood relatives. Examples from the textual analysis of the songs support Wardhaugh's claim that language determines how speakers perceive and organize their world (1988, p. 215). Both women's restricted language use and the attitudes and values embedded in Hindi vocabulary evoke a "derogation of women," indicating women's devalued role within the patriarchal order of north Indian society.

Ritual: A Means of Socialization

In addition to the pragmatic and semantic aspects of the Hindi language, the rites of a traditional north Indian wedding exemplify how members of the society have been "socialized into a hierarchical order of which a cardinal principle is the hierarchy of gender" (Mandelbaum, 1988, p. 48). The rites, grounded in the ideology of the patriarchy, are a means of socialization. The acts of the rites combine forces--religious, social, familial, linguistic--in order to instruct members and to emphasize what the culture perceives as members' appropriate roles. For women, the role is generally limited to that of wife and mother. In Indian society, the ideal wife is devoted to her husband, obedient, patient, accepting, serving, and fertile--qualities that are perceived to bring honor to her family and to her husband's (Fruzzetti, 1982). These qualities are expressed through individual rites acted out by the bride during the ceremony as well as through songs that are sung by her female relatives at the *sanjina geet.* (The *sanjina geet* are separate prenuptual ceremonies for the families of the groom and bride.) Acting out the ceremonial rites that typically take place the second day, the bride steps on seven small piles of rice, the rice a symbol of fertility (Fruzzetti, 1982, p.125). As she circles the ceremonial fire with the groom, the high point of the wedding, the bride pledges her devotion, obedience, patience, service, acceptance of her husband and his family. Thus actions and speech combine to create a speech situation that socializes participants and observers to the culture's ideology. The language of the bride's oaths and of the songs that are sung reflects her culture's ideology--the process by which meaning is produced and transformed (Silberstein, 1988).

Moreover, Hindu archetypes have influenced and defined images of woman within the culture (Vinoda, 1981). The ideal north Indian woman is a wife and mother who seeks fulfillment within the confines of her home; self-fulfillment is gained through her family. Like the Hindu goddesses who sacrificed their lives at the altar of their lords, the wife and mother is a willing scapegoat who would sacrifice her self at the altar of her family (Vinoda, 1981, p. 103). These qualities of obedience, devotion, and self-denial are created and sustained through the culture's dominant ideology and social structures such as religion, marriage rites, and gender roles. In

Women's Seclusion and Men's Honor: Sex Roles in North India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, David Mandelbaum (1988) attributes the subservient position of women to the power of the hierarchy, when "social superiority is constantly reaffirmed" through social systems, such as religion, that maintain the patriarchal ideology (pp. 54-55).

Analysis of the Wedding Songs: Background and Interpretation

The texts of Hindi weddings that I analyzed were translated from a recording of "live" performances and popular film songs. Film songs are frequently sung or played on tape at traditional weddings (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988; Goel and Kawatra, personal interviews).

Viv Edwards and Savita Katbamna (1988) note in their study, "The Wedding Songs of British Gujarati Women," that three genres of wedding songs correlate with specific rites of the wedding ceremony: songs of solidarity which coincide with the separation that is lamented during the *sanjina geet*, songs of insult which mark the transition from daughter to wife and daughter-in-law that is noted after the groom's procession, the *barat*, has arrived, and songs of consolation that denote the bride's incorporation into the groom's family after the ceremony. One of the four songs I examined, "Four very green eggplants" would fit Edwards' and Katbamna's category of songs of insult, for it belittles the bride and her sisters. Two of the texts, "Come with me to my parents' house" and "Come *saiyan*, I am ready, willing" are love songs. The fourth text, "Holi! Oh, Holi!" is a duelling song. Neither the duelling song nor the love songs fit Edwards and Katbamna's three-part scheme.

As well as being songs that would be sung during the *sanjina geet* and after the wedding ceremony, the texts have common structural traits with each other as well as other wedding songs. One common characteristic lies in the songs' use of repetition. For example, lines are repeated in "Four very green eggplants" and "Come *saiyan*, I am ready, willing," as well as in "I will go to my parents' house". Other likenesses among wedding songs are verbal duelling, such as in "Holi! Oh, Holi!", and the use of rhyme. In addition to these traits being vestiges of the Sanskrit court (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988), the rhyme and repetition most likely serve as a mnemonic aids for

the members of the group. Furthermore, the repetitive structure calls for a chorus leader to guide the women who are singing through the songs.

Typically, a woman who is known for her singing talent will be asked to lead the songs. Even though her talent is well-known, she must be coaxed into singing and pampered throughout the ceremony; it would be impolite for her to volunteer to sing (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988; Pandey, personal interview). Again, as a result of the social controls set forth by the patriarchy, the ideal woman is silent and modest, especially in public gatherings, so the chorus leader must act shy.

Although one woman will lead the songs that traditionally only women will sing, the songs are usually known by the entire community--female and male (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988). Participants and observers alike share the cultural norms expressed in the songs; the speech event is a group activity that holds the audience that is typically made up of the bride's relatives. The attitudes, ideas, values of the songs reflect the consensus of the group (Lomax and Halifax, 1968). The singing not only provides the women with a socially approved outlet for their talents, but it also allows for what Sherzer calls "a verbal letting off of steam;" the expression of feelings normally considered inappropriate, such as belittling the groom's family members, is now appropriate (Edwards and Katbamna, 1988; Sherzer, 1987, pp. 113-114). The shared knowledge confirms the values and attitudes expressed through the language of the songs and at the same time creates group solidarity through the shared knowledge. Moreover, as Lomax and Halifax contend, "the function of song texts is to set forth and reinforce the principle norms of a culture" (1968, p. 295).

The language of several songs reinforces family relationships which are the basis of north Indian society. Because the wedding is a time of transition for the bride as she leaves her natal family and joins her marital family, the songs express the importance of family ties. Also, it is the only acceptable time that the bride can "take [sic] her heart out. After that the groom becomes a really big person; this is the last time she can say 'You're taking so many things [from my family]; you're so greedy' " (Pandey, personal interview). In addition, the songs reflect the antagonism

that usually exists between the new bride and her sisters-in-law and mother-in-law. The "dramatization of antagonism" as Mandelbaum calls it (1988, p. 29), is in part real. Because the north Indian bride is typically subordinate to her husband and to his family, traditionally with whom she will now live, the stereotypical insults are directed toward the groom and his family members.

The songs of insult sung by the bride's relatives are a way for them to acknowledge her plight in an appropriate manner before the wedding takes place. The insult and teasing songs express general stereotypes of the in-laws, of the husband's sisters for example, but they will never be real or personal insults directed at a specific person (Goel, Kawatra, Pandey, and Nareen, personal interviews). As a "verbal letting off of steam," the songs of insult not only confirm natal family ties, but also allow the bride to publicly express what would otherwise be considered private sentiments.

The following song contains hostilities between the bride and her husband's sisters, *nanad*, and oldest sisters-in-law, *bhabhi* and *jathani*, and solidarity between her and her sisters, *bahen*. (Repetitions are marked in each song with the number of times repeated and x; for example a line marked 5x would be repeated five times.)

Four very green eggplants, (5x)	*Char baigan hare hare,*
The rat did the unforgivable. (5x)	*Valki ke choohe ne gazab kiya.*
Bhabhi's nose got bitten. (2x)	*Usne bhabhi ki nak katar li.*
Her mother says, "Oh! What a pity!" (2x)	*Uski amma boli ye kya hua!*
Her mother-in-law says, "Good!"	*Uski sas boli accha hua!*
Four very green eggplants (2x)	*Char baigan hare hare*
The bride got her ear bitten. (2x)	*Usne dulhan raja ki kan katar li.*
Bahen says, "Oh! What a pity!" (2x)	*Unke behena boli ye kya hua!*
Nanad says, "Good!"	*Uski nanad boli accha hua!*
Four very green eggplants (2x)	*Char baigan hare hare*
The bride's braid got chewed. (2x)	*Dulhan nada ki choti katar li.*
Bahen says, "Oh! What a pity!" (2x)	*Unke behena bole ye kya hua!*
Jathani says, "Good!"	*Unki jathani boli accha hua!*
Four very green eggplants (2x)	*Char baigan hare hare*

The "dramatized antagonism" between marital relations and unity between natal kin is obvious; the bride's sisters-in-law have no sympathy for her when the rat bites her. The

redundant patterns of the song are evidence of primary cultural ideologies; they communicate crucial statements about expected behaviors and attitudes (Lomax, 1968, p. xiii). Subtle teasing that reveals the culture's prejudice against women is evoked through the idea that a woman would be slow and stupid enough to have a rat actually bite her nose and ear, as well as chew her braid. Equally important, the line "*Bhabhi*'s nose got bitten" is a translation of a Hindi idiom meaning that she was shamed. In the context of the song, she and the bride are "shamed" by having the rat bite them. Realistically, each woman might try to shame the other in order to emphasize her own value. Within the context of a family, the bride and her husband's oldest sister-in-law would be at odds for power in the household--*bhabhi* having control over the new bride, but *bhabhi* being controlled by the mother-in-law. The women's status is created through their relationship to the male members of the family, whose status is marked by their ages.

Other expected family relationships are also represented in the texts. The socially mandated relationship between wife and husband--where the husband is the wife's superior and he is to receive symbolic and actual deference from her (Mandelbaum, 1988, p. 38)--is reinforced through the text of the love songs. The images of north Indian women represented in the song texts are a reflection of the tradition of hypergamy. Women of north India traditionally marry men of higher caste status. A woman's lower caste rank subordinates her to her marital family. Because of her inferiority to the husband, the bride's natal family is often obliged to pay a dowry at the time of the wedding and after. (Even though Indian law forbids dowry, it is still practiced.) The husband makes most of the family decisions, even those relating to the wife. For example, if the wife would like to visit her natal family, usually she cannot travel alone, so either her husband, brother, or father will accompany her, but then only if her husband consents to the visit (Manohar, 1981; Pandey, personal interview). Normally the natal family will never visit the bride's new home with her in-laws, again because of their inferior status as compared with the marital family's. To make an independent decision, such as visiting her family, the wife would be showing disrespect for her husband (Manohar, 1981, p. 60). So in order to influence her husband and his decisions, the wife

might promise to serve him, and to serve him well. The text of the following song represents the wife's dependence on the husband:

I will go to my parents' house when *savaria* is with me. (2x)

I will get very fine rice and get it ground to flour.

If you will go with me to my parents' house,
then I'll give it to you to eat *savaria*. (refrain, 2x)
Stay with me *savaria* (1x)
(refrain, 3x)

Stay with me, *savaria*

Peehare chaloonge jub
sung ho, savaria
Baareek baareek chaval ka mai
atta pisaoongi.
Peehare chalenge toe
khilaoongi, savaria.
Sung ho, savaria.
Peehare chalenge toe
khilaoongi, savaria.
Sung ho, savaria.

In the text above, the term of endearment *savaria* has not been translated for lack of an English equivalent. It could mean 'lover' or an endearment like 'sweetie pie', but it also implies 'husband' since typically a woman would be married to her lover. Love is expected to evolve because of marriage in traditional Indian relationships, unlike in the U.S. where marriage tends to evolve from love.

Not only does the language of the song represent the wife's dependence on the husband, but the original Hindi marks the text with honorifics that reflect her subordinate position. For example, the English phrase "If you will go with me" is *chalenge* in Hindi. The suffix *-enge* denoting honor and masculinity in this third person plural verb form. Usually, a wife will use the more formal forms with her husband, again to show him respect. He will generally use the less formal forms in speaking to her. The use of the verb in third person plural form is considered more respectful than using the second person form. The female speaker in the song uses *chalenge* to address *saiyan* rather than using *chaloonge* , the third person form used with speakers on equal terms or in reference to themselves. Thus through the speaker's use of honorifics she is reinforcing the culture's attitude that women should pay deference to men.

In addition to the use of grammatical constructions such as honorifics, the vocabulary represents the ideology of the belief that women have no worth without a man. The culture's ideology of woman as object and then as a devalued object is exemplified in the following love

song in which the wife explains that without *saiyan* and *sajar* (other non-translatable terms of endearment), nothing is any good:

Come, *saiyan*, I am ready, willing.	*Chale ao saiyan mai vai re.*
Without you I do not like flower bracelets:	*Sajan mohe ap bin bhaye na kajra:*
Nor *mutiya, chameli, joohi, mugra.* (2x)	*Na mutiya, chameli, joohi, na mugra.*
Come, *sajar*, I am ready, willing.	*Chale ao sajar, mai vari re*
Saiyan, without you I do not like jewelry...	*Saiyan ap bin bhaye na zevar...*
Saiyan, without you I do not like any make-up...	*Saiyan ap bin bhaye na mehndi...*

An interpretation of this language, that the speaker is no good without her man, would be consistent with the ideology that represents women as value-less. The speaker's lower status is further reflected in her use of the formal second person pronoun *ap* as in lines two, five, and six above. It's interesting too that the things, for example bracelets made of the flowers *mutiya, chameli, joohi, mugra*, the speaker implies are no good without her man have strictly ornamental use to make the woman more attractive.

Patriarchal control is also revealed in the language of a song that might be sung by a new bride and groom during their first Holi festival. This is a festival celebrating spring harvest in north India. The festivals and holidays of the first year of marriage are important in showing the community the new relationship and social position of the bride. They provide occasions for her to wear fine clothes and jewelry (Pandey, personal interview). The celebration of Holi includes some very physical activities that normally would not be appropriate public behavior: people throw colored powder on each other and often times newly married couples, those who are engaged, or attracted to each other will apply the powder to one another's faces. The usual social restraints are lifted for this one celebration.

In addition to reflecting the dominance that a husband has over his wife, the following song exemplifies the release of the normal social restraints:

Holi! Oh, Holi!	*Holi! Re, Holi!*
Amma, I play Holi.	*Amma, kheloon mai Holi.*
Will you play Holi with me?	*Mere sang khel too Holi?*
If *piya* says [it's ok] then I'll play Holi with you.	*Piya kahe to kheloon mai tere sang Holi.*
I'll get a necklace made for you if you play Holi with me.	*Necklace bana doon khel snag Holi.*

Get a bracelet made for me, then I'll play Holi with you.	*Kada banvava to kheloon dang Holi.*
I'll get a bracelet made.	*Kada bana doon.*
Come play Holi.	*Aa khel sang Holi.*
If *saiyan* agrees then I'll play Holi.	*Saiyab kahe to kheloon sang Holi.*
There is too much lacking in your offer,	*Kasar rahi,*
I'm not going to play Holi.	*Na kheloon mai Holi.*
Get me earrings made.	*Gittiyan bana de.*
I'll get you earrings.	*Gittiyan bana doon.*
Earrings or no earrings, I won't play Holi.	*Gittiyan na gittiyan na kheloon mai Holi.*
I'll get ankle bracelets made.	*Paizav banua doon.*
Play Holi with me.	*Khel mere sang Holi.*
If you get bracelets made then I'll play Holi.	*Kode bana de kheloon mai Holi.*
I'll get bracelets made; now play Holi.	*Kode bana doon kheloon mai Holi.*
If you get *kajar* made, I'll play Holi with you.	*Kajar bana de kheloon mai Holi.*
I'll get *kajar* made for you.	*Kajar banawa doon.*
Play Holi with me.	*Khel sang Holi.*
Kajar or ganger, I won't play Holi with you.	*Kajar na ganger ne kelooni mai Holi.*
I'll come from here.	*Idhar se aunga.*
I'll spread thorns.	*Kante bichaungi.*
I'll come from there.	*Udar se aunga.*
I'll spread embers.	*Angar bichaungi.*
I'll come from the top.	*Uper se aunga.*
I'll shower water.	*Pani barasaungi.*
I'll fall at your feet; please play Holi with me.	*Paiyan padun; khel sang Holi.*

The text represents how restrictions have been lifted so much that the woman can make the decision to play Holi with the man based on what he offers her, but not so much that she can act on her own accord--she still must ask the permission of *piya*, another term of endearment for a person, most likely the speaker's husband, to participate in the celebration with another man. One reason for her to be propositioned by a man other than her husband might be that the male speaker is a brother-in-law. It would be acceptable, especially if he was a younger brother to her husband, to interact with the woman like this (Pandey, personal interview). Again family relationships are represented along with women's lack of power.

The verbal duelling of the dialogue adds to this power play. The woman begins the song simply proclaiming that she's playing Holi. The man intervenes by asking her to join him. A verbal duel follows with him trying to persuade her to play with him and with her constantly refusing his offers. Thus the structure of the song mirrors the role reversals and relaxation of social restraints. When the man says "I'll fall at your feet", he truly shows his willingness to win the favor of this woman. The act of bowing to touch someone's feet is a great sign of respect that

women would typically show to men, but not vice versa, thus role reversal is represented in the language and promised actions of the speakers as well. Similarly, the value of jewelry in relationship to gender is brought out through the items that the man uses to bribe the woman. It can be assumed, even though it is not stated, that the woman does not accept the man's offer: "*Kajar* or *ganger*, I won't play Holi with you." (*Kanjar* means 'bracelet.' *Ganger* is used for its rhyme; it means 'carrot'.)

Conclusion

These songs and the contexts in which they are performed are a small sample of language situations that create and reinforce cultural ideologies. Wedding rites of north India demonstrate how the members of that culture are socialized into the dominant ideology of the patriarchy. The values and attitudes of the dominant group construct one ideal role for women--wife and mother. The language reinforces the "culturally promulgated prejudice" (Penelope, 1988, p. 266). Not only does it depict women as devalued, obedient, devoted, serving objects, but it also forces women to accept this role in their use of the patriarchy's language. The highly developed system of hierarchy requires the subjugation of women (Sherzer, 1987, p. 116). The combination of ceremonial rites and speech events of a traditional north Indian wedding interact to create and maintain the social construction of gender.

The claims I have made about the reflection of women's roles in north Indian wedding rites and in the language used get at some of the essential beliefs of the dominant ideology of this society. Because language is a social construction, it reflects aspects of the dominant culture. Linguists--Schulz (1975), Sherzer (1987), Spender (1980), Penelope (1988), Edwards (1988), and anthropologists--Mandelbaum (1970, 1988), Fruzzetti (1982), Vinoda (1981), and Katbamna (1988), among others, concur that language is not only a reflection of a culture and its various elements, but also a means of maintaining the ideology that creates the particular culture.

In order to continue with this project and to prevent misinterpretation of the role of women, north Indian culture, or any perceptions of observations taken from a linguistic analysis, I plan to

extend this study to larger samples of texts and interviews, research extensively other sociolinguistic and anthropological studies, while immersing myself in the culture as well as I can as an "outsider."

Acknowledgements

Many, many thanks to Prashanth Narasimha and Apurna Pandey for hours of transcribing and translating the texts. I am also grateful to Mrs. Goel, Geeta Kawatra, Ruma Nareen, Apurna Pandey, and Pankaja Echempati for sharing with me their perspectives and experiences as women in India. In addition, I would not have able to produce this re-vision of my paper without the guidance and insight of Vicky Bergvall, Denise Heikinen, Victoria Leto DeFrancisco, and Jerry Savage, nor without the suggestions and issues raised by the participants and audience of Panel 5--Gender and Language and an Image of One's Self , Parasession on Gender and Language at the Fifth Annual International Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning, University of Illinois, 1991.

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